

NELSON MANDELA MEMORIAL LECTURE BY
PRESIDENT THABO MBEKI: UNIVERSITY OF
WITWATERSRAND, JULY 29, 2006.

Esteemed Member of the Order of Mapungubwe,
Nobel Peace Laureate, Isithwalandwe,
Seaparankwe, Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela,
Dr Graca Machel,
Deputy President of our country, Phumzile Mlambo-
Ngcuka,
Ministers and Deputy Ministers,
Chairperson of the Nelson Mandela Foundation,
Professor Jakes Gerwel,
Chairperson of the Organising Committee,
Professor Kader Asmal,
Your Excellencies, Members of the Diplomatic
Corps,
Distinguished guests,
Comrades, friends,
Fellow South Africans:

I believe I know this as a matter of fact, that the
great masses of our country everyday pray that the
new South Africa that is being born will be a good,
a moral, a humane and a caring South Africa,
which, as it matures, will progressively guarantee
the happiness of all its citizens.

I say this as I begin this Lecture to warn you about
my intentions, which are about trying to convince
you that because of the infancy of our brand new
society, we have the possibility to act in ways that

would, for the foreseeable future, infuse the values of Ubuntu into our very being as a people.

But what is it that constitutes Ubuntu – beyond the standard and yet correct rendition – *Motho ke motho ka motho yo mongoe: Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu!*

The Book of Proverbs in the Holy Bible contains some injunctions that capture a number of elements of what I believe constitute important features of the Spirit of Ubuntu, which we should strive to implant in the very bosom of the new South Africa that is being born – the food of the soul that would inspire all our people to say that they are proud to be South African!

The Proverbs say:

“Withhold not good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thine hand to do it. Say not unto thy neighbour, Go, and come again, and to morrow I will give; when thou hast it by thee.

“Devise not evil against thy neighbour, seeing he dwelleth securely by thee. Strive not with a man without cause, if he have done thee no harm. Envy thou not the oppressor, and choose none of his ways.”

The Book of Proverbs assumes that as human beings, we have the human capacity to do as it says - not to withhold the good from them to whom

it is due, when it is in the power of (our) hand to do it, and not to say NO to our neighbour, come again, and we will give you something tomorrow, even when we can give the necessary help today.

It assumes that we can be encouraged not to devise evil against our neighbours, with whom we otherwise live in harmony.

It assumes that we are capable of responding to the injunction that we should not declare war against anybody without cause, especially those who have not caused us any harm.

It urges that in our actions, we should not seek to emulate the demeanour of our oppressors, nor adopt their evil practices.

I am conscious of the fact that to the cynics, all this sounds truly like the behaviour we would expect and demand of angels. I am also certain that all of us are convinced that, most unfortunately, we would find it difficult to find such angels in our country, who would number more than the fingers on two hands!

It may indeed very well be that, as against coming across those we can honestly describe as good people, we would find it easier to identify not only evil-doers, but also those who intentionally set out to do evil. In this regard, we would not be an exception in terms both of time and space.

To illustrate what I am trying to say, I will take the liberty to quote words from the world of drama. I know of none of Shakespeare's Tragedies, except Richard III, that begins with an open declaration of villainy by the very villain of the play.

This well-known play begins with an oration by the Duke of Gloucester, who later becomes King Richard III, in which he unashamedly declares his evil intentions, in these famous words:

“Now is the winter of our discontent
Made glorious summer by this sun of York;
And all the clouds that lour'd upon our house
In the deep bosom of the ocean buried.
Now are our brows bound with victorious wreaths;
Our bruised arms hung up for monuments;...
And therefore, since I cannot prove a lover,
To entertain these fair well-spoken days,
I am determined to prove a villain
And hate the idle pleasures of these days.
Plots have I laid, inductions dangerous,
By drunken prophecies, libels and dreams,
To set my brother Clarence and the king
In deadly hate the one against the other...”

This open proclamation of evil intent stands in direct opposition to the directive in the Proverbs, which said, “Devise not evil against thy neighbour, seeing he dwelleth securely by thee. Strive not with a man without cause, if he have done thee no harm.”

Surely, all this tells us the naked truth that the intention to do good, however noble in its purposes, does not guarantee that such good will be done.

Nevertheless we must ask ourselves the question whether this reality of the presence of many Richards III in our midst, dictates that we should, accordingly, avoid setting ourselves the goal to do good!

Many years ago now, Nelson Mandela made bold to say that our country needs an “RDP of the soul”, the Reconstruction and Development of its soul.

He made this call as our country, in the aftermath of our liberation in 1994, was immersed in an effort to understand the elements of the Reconstruction and Development Programme that had constituted the core of the Election Manifesto of the ANC in our first democratic elections.

That RDP was eminently about changing the material conditions of the lives of our people. It made no reference to matters of the soul, except indirectly. For instance, the RDP document said:

“The RDP integrates (economic) growth, development, reconstruction and redistribution into a unified programme. The key to this link is an infrastructural programme that will provide access to modern and effective services like electricity, water, telecommunications, transport, health, education and training for all our people... This will

lead to an increased output in all sectors of the economy, and by modernising our infrastructure and human resource development, we will also enhance export capacity. Success in linking reconstruction and development is essential if we are to achieve peace and security for all.”

All of these were, and remain critically important and eminently correct objectives that we must continue to pursue. Indeed, in every election since 1994, our contending parties have vied for the favours of our people on the basis of statistics that are about all these things.

All revolutions, which, by definition, seek to replace one social order with another, are, in the end, and in essence, concerned with human beings and the improvement of the human condition. This is also true of our Democratic Revolution of 1994.

Assuming this assertion to be true, we must also say that human fulfilment consists of more than “access to modern and effective services like electricity, water, telecommunications, transport, health, education and training for all our people”, to use the words in the RDP document.

As distinct from other species of the animal world, human beings also have spiritual needs. It might perhaps be more accurate and less arrogant to say that these needs are more elevated and have a more defining impact on human beings than they do on other citizens of the animal world.

Thus do all of us, and not merely the religious leaders, speak of the intangible element that is immanent in all human beings – the soul!

Acceptance of this proposition as a fact must necessarily mean that we have to accept the related assertion that, consequently, all human societies also have a soul!

To deny this would demand that we argue in a convincing manner, and therefore with all due logical coherence, that the fact that individual human beings might have a soul does not necessarily mean that the human societies they combine to constitute will themselves, in consequence, also have a soul!

I dare say that this would prove to be an impossible task. Nevertheless, we must accept that, as in the contrast provided by the Proverbs and Richard III, and with regard to the construction of a humane and caring society, we must accept that this entails a struggle, rather than any self-evident and inevitable victory of good over evil.

The question must therefore arise – for those among us who believe that we represent the good, what must we do to succeed in our purposes!

Since no human action takes place outside of established objective reality, and since we want to achieve our objectives, necessarily we must strive

to understand the social conditions that would help to determine whether we succeed or fail.

What I have said relates directly to what needed and needs to be done to achieve the objective that Nelson Mandela set the nation, to accomplish the RDP of its soul.

In this regard, I will take the liberty to quote what I said in 1978 in a Lecture delivered in Canada, reflecting on the formation of South African society, which was later reproduced in the ANC journal, "Sechaba", under the title "The Historical Injustice".

"The historic compromise of 1910 has therefore this significance that in granting the vanquished Boer equal political and social status with the British victor, it imposed on both the duty to defend the status quo against especially those whom that status quo defined as the dominated. The capitalist class, to whom everything has a cash value, has never considered moral incentives as very dependable. As part of the arrangement, it therefore decided that material incentives must play a prominent part.

"It consequently bought out the whole white population. It offered a price to the white workers and the Afrikaner farmers in exchange for an undertaking that they would shed their blood in defence of capital. Both worker and farmer, like Faustus, took the devil's offering and, like Faustus, they will have to pay on the appointed day.

“The workers took the offering in monthly cash grants and reserved jobs. The farmers took their share by having black labour, including and especially prison labour directed to the farms. They also took it in the form of huge subsidies and loans to help them maintain a ‘civilised standard of living’.”

Of relevance to our purposes this evening, the critical point conveyed in these paragraphs is that, within the context of the development of capitalism in our country, individual acquisition of material wealth, produced through the oppression and exploitation of the black majority, became the defining social value in the organisation of white society.

Because the white minority was the dominant social force in our country, it entrenched in our society as a whole, including among the oppressed, the deep-seated understanding that personal wealth constituted the only true measure of individual and social success.

As we achieved our freedom in 1994, this had become the dominant social value, affecting the entirety of our population. Inevitably, as an established social norm, this manifested itself even in the democratic state machinery that had, seemingly “seamlessly”, replaced the apartheid state machinery.

I am arguing that the new order, born of the victory in 1994, inherited a well-entrenched value system that placed individual acquisition of wealth at the very centre of the value system of our society as a whole.

In practice this meant that, provided this did not threaten overt social disorder, society assumed a tolerant or permissive attitude towards such crimes as theft and corruption, especially if these related to public property.

The phenomenon we are describing, which we considered as particularly South African, was in fact symptomatic of the capitalist system in all countries. It had been analysed by all serious commentators on the capitalist political-economy, including such early analysts as Adam Smith.

Specifically, in this regard, we are speaking of the observations made by the political-economists that, since the onset of capitalism in England, the values of the capitalist market, of individual profit maximisation, had tended to displace the values of human solidarity.

In despair at this development, R. H. Tawney wrote in his famous book, "Religion and the Rise of Capitalism":

"To argue, in the manner of Machiavelli, that there is one rule for business and another for private life, is to open the door to an orgy of unscrupulousness

before which the mind recoils...(Yet) granted that I should love my neighbour as myself, the questions which, under modern conditions of large-scale (economic) organisation, remain for solution are, Who precisely is my neighbour? And, How exactly am I to make my love for him effective in practice?

“To these questions the conventional religious teaching supplied no answer, for it had not even realised that they could be put...Religion had not yet learned to console itself for the practical difficulty of applying its moral principles, by clasping the comfortable formula that for the transactions of economic life no moral principles exist.”

In his well known book, “The Great Transformation”, in a Chapter headed “Market and Man”, Karl Polanyi went on to say:

“To separate labour from other activities of life and to subject it to the laws of the market was to annihilate all organic forms of existence and to replace them by a different type of organisation, an atomistic and individualist one.

“Such a scheme of destruction was best served by the application of the principle of freedom of contract. In practice this meant that the non-contractual organisations of kinship, neighbourhood, profession, and creed were to be liquidated since they claimed the allegiance of the individual and thus restrained his freedom.

“To represent this principle as one of non-interference, as economic liberals were wont to do, was merely the expression of an ingrained prejudice in favour of a definite kind of interference, namely, such as would destroy non-contractual relations between individuals and prevent the spontaneous reformation.”

In a Foreword to a recent edition of this book, Joseph Stiglitz says: “Polanyi stresses a particular defect in the self-regulating economy that only recently has been brought back into discussion. It involves the relationship between the economy and society, with how economic systems, or reforms, can affect how individuals relate to one another. Again, as the importance of social relations has increasingly become recognised, the vocabulary has changed. We now talk, for instance, about social capital.”

With reference to this Lecture, the central point made by Polanyi is that the capitalist market destroys relations of “kinship, neighbourhood, profession, and creed”, replacing these with the pursuit of personal wealth by citizens who, as he says, have become “atomistic and individualistic.”

Thus, everyday, and during every hour of our time beyond sleep, the demons embedded in our society, that stalk us at every minute, seem always to beckon each one of us towards a realisable dream and nightmare. With every passing second,

they advise, with rhythmic and hypnotic regularity –
get rich! get rich! get rich!

And thus has it come about that many of us accept that our common natural instinct to escape from poverty is but the other side of the same coin on whose reverse side are written the words – at all costs, get rich!

In these circumstances, personal wealth, and the public communication of the message that we are people of wealth, becomes, at the same time, the means by which we communicate the message that we are worthy citizens of our community, the very exemplars of what defines the product of a liberated South Africa.

This peculiar striving produces the particular result that manifestations of wealth, defined in specific ways, determine the individuality of each one of us who seeks to achieve happiness and self-fulfilment, given the liberty that the revolution of 1994 brought to all of us.

In these circumstances, the meaning of freedom has come to be defined not by the seemingly ethereal and therefore intangible gift of liberty, but by the designer labels on the clothes we wear, the cars we drive, the spaciousness of our houses and our yards, their geographic location, the company we keep, and what we do as part of that company.

In the event that what I have said has come across as a meaningless ramble, let me state what I have been saying more directly.

It is perfectly obvious that many in our society, having absorbed the value system of the capitalist market, have come to the conclusion that, for them, personal success and fulfilment means personal enrichment at all costs, and the most theatrical and striking public display of that wealth.

What this means is that many in our society have come to accept that what is socially correct is not the proverbial expression – “manners maketh the man” – but the notion that each one of us is as excellent a human being as our demonstrated wealth suggests!

On previous occasions, I have cited statements made by the well-known financier, George Soros, which directly confront the crisis to social cohesion and human solidarity caused by what I have sought to address – the elevation of the profit motive and the personal acquisition of wealth as the principal and guiding objectives in the construction of modern societies, including our own.

With your permission, and because it is relevant to what I am trying to communicate, I will take the liberty to quote this paragraph once again, believing that it resonates with a particular sense of honesty, because it emanates from one of the iconic figures of late 20th century capitalism.

Among other things, George Soros said that in an earlier epoch, “People were guided by a set of moral principles that found expression in behaviour outside the scope of the market mechanism...

“Unsure of what they stand for, people increasingly rely on money as the criterion of value. What is more expensive is considered better...People deserve respect and admiration because they are rich. What used to be a medium of exchange has usurped the place of fundamental values, reversing the relationship postulated by economic theory. What used to be professions have turned into businesses. The cult of success has replaced a belief in principles. Society has lost its anchor...

“The laissez-faire argument against income redistribution invokes the doctrine of the survival of the fittest...There is something wrong with making the survival of the fittest a guiding principle of civilised society...Cooperation is as much a part of the (economic) system as competition, and the slogan ‘survival of the fittest’ distorts this fact...

“I blame the prevailing attitude, which holds that the unhampered pursuit of self-interest will bring about an eventual international equilibrium (in the world economy).”

(All quotations from: George Soros: “The Capitalist Threat”. The Atlantic Monthly, February 1997.)

The critical concern that George Soros has expressed is what he describes as “market fundamentalism”, the dominance and precedence of the capitalist motive of private profit maximisation, which has evolved into the central objective that informs the construction of modern human society in all its elements.

Nothing can come out of this except the destruction of human society, resulting from the atomisation of society into an agglomeration of individuals who pursue mutually antagonistic materialist goals.

Necessarily, and inevitably, this cannot but negate social cohesion and mutually beneficial human solidarity, and therefore the most fundamental condition of the existence of all human beings, namely, the mutually interdependent human relationships without which the individual human being cannot exist.

I am arguing that, whatever the benefit to any individual member of our nation, including all those present in this hall, we nevertheless share a fundamental objective to defeat the tendency in our society towards the deification of personal wealth as the distinguishing feature of the new citizen of the new South Africa.

With some trepidation, advisedly assuming that there is the allotted proportion of hardened cynics present here this evening, I will nevertheless make

bold to quote an ancient text, which reads, in Old English:

“Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise: which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest.

“How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? when wilt thou arise out of thy sleep? Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: so shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed man.”

I know that given the level of education of our audience this evening, the overwhelming majority among us will know that I have extracted the passages I have quoted from the Book of Proverbs contained in the St James' edition of the Holy Bible.

It may be that the scepticism of our age has dulled our collective and individual sensitivity to the messages of this Book of Faith and all the messages that it seeks to convey to all of us.

In this regard, I know that I have not served the purposes of this Book well, by exploiting the possibility it provides, to say to you and everybody else who might be listening - “Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise...”

Everyday, the ant, one of the smallest inhabitants of our common animal world, goes about her ways in

search of sustenance, depending on nature's harvest in all seasons, as well as her own little ways, to provide her with meat in the hot summer months.

To consider her ways means that we too, who unknowingly squash to death the miniscule pygmies of the world, as we tread the common earth as giants of the universe, means that we must develop the wisdom that will ensure the survival and cohesion of human society.

It assumes that we have the humility to understand that "a little folding of the hands to sleep", travel and service in the defence of the nation, might impoverish us by depriving us of our regular meals, but simultaneously make us "happy (as) the man that (finds) wisdom, and the man that (gets) understanding."

It would be dishonest of me not to assume that what I have cited from the Book of Proverbs will, at best, evoke literary interest, and, at worst, a minor theological controversy.

My own view is that the Proverbs raise important issues that bear on what our nation is trying to do to define the soul of the new South Africa.

I believe they communicate a challenging message about how we should respond to the situation immanent in our society concerning the adulation of personal wealth, and the attendant tendency to pay

little practical regard to what each one of us might do to assist our neighbour to achieve the goal of a better life.

I must also accept that many among us might very well think that, like the proverbial King Canute, I am trying to wish away the waves of self-aggrandisement that might be characteristic of global human society.

To return to the Holy Bible, the Book of Genesis says, “In the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art and unto dust shalt thou return”. (Genesis 3:19).

This Biblical text suggests that of critical importance to every South African is consideration of the material conditions of life, and therefore the attendant pursuit of personal wealth. After all, what interpretation should be attached to the statement that “In the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat bread”!

Perhaps strangely, this could be said to coincide exactly with a fundamental proposition advanced by the founders of Marxism, expressed by Friederich Engels at the funeral of Karl Marx in the following words:

“Just as Darwin discovered the law of development or organic nature, so Marx discovered the law of development of human history: the simple fact, hitherto concealed by an overgrowth of ideology,

that mankind must first of all eat, drink, have shelter and clothing, before it can pursue politics, science, art, religion, etc.; that therefore the production of the immediate material means, and consequently the degree of economic development attained by a given people or during a given epoch, form the foundation upon which the state institutions, the legal conceptions, art, and even the ideas on religion, of the people concerned have been evolved, and in the light of which they must, therefore, be explained, instead of vice versa, as had hitherto been the case.”

Putting all this in more dramatic language, Marx had said: “Man must eat before he can think”! In this regard, Vladimir Lenin, the leader of the 1917 Russian Revolution, said: “Before we perceive, we breathe: we cannot exist without air, food and drink”.

In the context of this Lecture, and what we will say later, we must state that Marx and Engels represented a particular point of view in the evolution of the discipline of philosophy, and were not asserting any love for the private accumulation of wealth. They were “materialists”, who were militantly opposed to another philosophical tendency described as “idealism”.

One of the most famous expressions of this “idealism” was stated by the French scholar and philosopher, Rene Descartes, who wrote, in Latin: **"Cogito, ergo sum."** ("I think, therefore I am", and,

in the original French rendition, "Je pense, donc je suis".)

In the context of our own challenges, this "idealism" must serve to focus our attention on issues other than the tasks of the production and distribution of material wealth.

The philosophers in our ranks will have to engage the old debate of the relationship between mind and matter expressed in the statements, "Man must eat before he can think."!, and "I think, therefore I am."

I am certain that our country's philosopher-theologians will continue to be interested in these discussions. After all, some of the earliest expression of "idealism", as a philosophical expression, is also contained in the Holy Bible.

In this regard, for instance, St John's Gospel says: "In the beginning was the Word..."

I am certain that many in this auditorium have been asking themselves the question why I have referred so insistently on the Christian Holy Scriptures. Let me explain.

I believe that it is obvious to all of us that economic news and our economic challenges have come to occupy a central element of our daily diet of information.

Matters relating to such important issues as unemployment and job creation, disbursements from the national budget and expenditures on such items of education, health, welfare and transport, the economic growth rate, the balance between our imports and exports, the value of the Rand, skills development, broad based black economic empowerment, and the development of the “second economy”, have all become part of our daily discourse.

Nevertheless the old intellectual debate between “materialists” and “idealists”, whatever side we take in this regard, must tell us that human life is about more than the economy, and therefore material considerations.

I believe that as a nation we must make a special effort to understand and act on this, because of what I have said already, that personal pursuit of material gain, as the beginning and end of our life purpose, is already beginning to corrode our social and national cohesion.

Clearly, what this means is that when we talk of a better life for all, within the context of a shared sense of national unity and national reconciliation, we must look beyond the undoubtedly correct economic objectives our nation has set itself.

In this context, I must say that, most unfortunately, there is much trouble in the world. Much too regularly all of us are exposed, daily, to news of

human-made conflict and death, and the disasters caused by poverty and natural disasters.

In reality I must confess that I have hardly ever heard of conflicts caused merely by low economic growth rates, currency movements and balance of payments problems, except to the extent that these produce a crisis in society.

Currently, none of us can avoid being extremely concerned about what is happening in the Middle East. What is happening in this region constitutes a tinder box that has the potential to set the whole world aflame. As a country and people, we surely know that the highly negative events in the Middle East are of direct and immediate concern to us.

It seems tragically clear that here we are confronted with an impending catastrophe that is almost out of control. Nothing that has been done and said during this period of high crisis that has produced the necessary agreement which would pull humanity back from the brink of an escalating conflict that can only feed on itself, leading to a further fanning of the terrible fires that already seem to be burning out of control.

In this regard we must pose the question whether, even in the medium term, we are not ineluctably progressing towards the situation when the centre cannot hold. I refer here not only to the serious problems in the Middle East but to the phenomenon of social conflict everywhere else in the world.

As Europe and the world sowed the seeds for the catastrophe later represented by the Second World War as in a Greek tragedy, the eminent Irish poet, William Butler Yeats, like other European thinkers, sounded alarm bells that nobody seemed to hear.

What he said survives today as outstanding poetry. Hopefully, the warning he sounded so many decades ago will be heard today, so that, by our acts of commission and omission, we do not condemn humanity to an age of extreme misery and death that could have been avoided.

In an appeal to the Muses, when all else seems to be failing, I take this opportunity humbly to summon from the grave an extraordinary human mind, to inspire the living to focus on the dangers ahead, and strive to ensure that, emanating from Jerusalem, the acre of the fountain of many faiths, no monstrous beast slouches out of Bethlehem to be born!

Thus do I appeal that all of us, the mighty and the lowly, hear the words of the poet not only with our ears, but also with our minds and our hearts, as he spoke of “The Second Coming”!

Turning and turning in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and
everywhere

The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity.
Surely some revelation is at hand;
Surely the Second Coming is at hand...
A shape with lion body and the head of a man,
A gaze blank and pitiless as the sun,
Is moving its slow thighs, while all about it
Reel shadows of the indignant desert birds...
...but now I know
That twenty centuries of stony sleep
were vexed to nightmare by a rocking cradle,
And what rough beast, its hour come round at
last,
Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?

I believe that for us to ensure that things do not fall apart, we must, in the first instance, never allow that the market should be the principal determinant of the nature of our society. We should firmly oppose the “market fundamentalism” which George Soros has denounced as the force that has led society to lose its anchor.

Instead, we must place at the centre of our daily activities the pursuit of the goals of social cohesion and human solidarity. We must, therefore, strive to integrate into the national consciousness the value system contained in the world outlook described as Ubuntu.

We must therefore constantly ask ourselves the question – what is it in our country that militates

against social cohesion and human solidarity? I believe that none of us present here tonight would have any difficulty in answering this question.

I am therefore certain that we would all agree that to achieve the social cohesion and human solidarity we seek, we must vigorously confront the legacy of poverty, racism and sexism. At the same time, we must persist in our efforts to achieve national reconciliation.

Mere reliance on the market would never help us to achieve these outcomes. Indeed, if we were to rely on the market to produce these results, what would happen would be the exacerbation of the deep-seated problems of poverty, racism and sexism and a retreat from the realisation of the objective of national reconciliation.

Then indeed would we open the door to the demons that W.B. Yeats saw slouching towards Bethlehem to be born – emerging from the situation where the centre could not hold, in which mere anarchy would be loosed upon the world.

We must therefore say that the Biblical injunction is surely correct, that “Man cannot live by bread alone”, and therefore that the mere pursuit of individual wealth can never satisfy the need immanent in all human beings to lead lives of happiness.

The conflicts we see today and have seen in many parts of the world should themselves communicate the daily message to us that the construction of cohesive human society concerns much more than the attainment of high economic growth rates, important as this objective is.

As we agonise over the unnecessary killings of innocent people and the destruction of much-needed infrastructure in Iraq and Palestine, in Lebanon and Israel, we have to ensure that we do not slide into an era when the falcon cannot hear the falconer, when things fall apart and the centre cannot hold.

Indeed, as we, South Africans, grapple with our own challenges, billions of the poor and the marginalised across the globe see the world ever evolving into a more sinister, cold and bitter place: this is the world that is gradually defined by increasing racism, xenophobia, ethnic animosity, religious conflicts, and the scourge of terrorism.

In this context, we have seen the rise of rightwing formations, racism, xenophobia and religious intolerance in France, Germany, Holland, Russia and many other European countries. This, in part, is a reaction to the relentless development of complex and varied forms that societies are ineluctably assuming due to the processes of globalisation.

It nevertheless also points to the absence of an integrative thrust – some reconciler – the

institutionalised processes that would end the sense of alienation and marginalisation that leads to social conflict.

Indeed even in these developed societies, rising levels of poverty and insecurity have invariably conspired to fertilise the ground from which germinates ignorance about the 'other', and portend a bleak future for the prospect of what has been called a dialogue among civilisations.

In many European countries, immigration from the South is seen as an intrusive force that is bound to create 'impurities' in local cultures and in many instances, put a burden on available resources. In this regard, I am certain that all of us have been dismayed to see the way in which many in Europe have responded to the African economic migrants, who daily risk their lives to escape the grinding poverty in our own African countries.

Fortunately, in our case, I would say that our nation has begun to exhibit many critical common features deriving from a unified vision of a society based on non-racialism, non-sexism, shared prosperity, and peace and stability. Yet, at the same time, we still display strong traits of our divided past, with the debate about our future quite often coalescing along definite racial lines.

Despite this, and despite the advances we have made in our 12 years of freedom, we must also recognise the reality that we still have a long way to

go before we can say we have eradicated the embedded impulses that militate against social cohesion, human solidarity and national reconciliation.

We should never allow ourselves the dangerous luxury of complacency, believing that we are immune to the conflicts that we see and have seen in so many parts of the world.

At the very same time as a ray of hope shone over our country and continent with the liberation of our country in 1994, and as you, Madiba, declared to the world that “the sun shall never set on so glorious a day”, our fellow Africans, the Rwandese people, engulfed in a horrific genocide, lamented in unison that: ‘the angels have left us’.

In a Foreword to the book of the same name, Archbishop Tutu said: “When we come face to face with ghastly atrocities we are appalled and want to ask: ‘But what happened to these people that they have acted in this manner? What happened to their humanity that they should become inhumane?’

“...Yes we hang our heads in shame as we witness our extraordinary capacity to be vicious, cruel and almost devoid of humanness.”

The imperative we face is that we should never permit that our country should witness the actions devoid of humanness of which Archbishop Tutu

spoke, some of which were a feature of our long years of colonialism and apartheid.

Indeed, in a world that still suffers from the blight of intolerance, wars, antagonistic conflicts, racism, tribalism and marginalisation, national reconciliation and reconciliation among the nations, will remain a challenge that must occupy the entire human race continuously.

In our case we should say that we are fortunate that we had a Nelson Mandela who made bold to give us the task to attend to the “RDP of the soul”, and lent his considerable weight to the achievement of the goal of national reconciliation and the achievement of the goal of a better life for all our people.

Ten years ago, Madiba travelled to the Republic of Congo to assist the people of the then Zaire, and now the Democratic Republic of Congo, to make peace among themselves. In this regard, he was conscious of the task we share as Africans to end the conflicts on our Continent, many of which are driven by the failure to effect the RDP of the African soul, to uphold the principles of Ubuntu, consciously to strive for social cohesion, human solidarity and national reconciliation.

Tomorrow the people of the DRC will go to the polls to elect their President and Members of the National Assembly. Everything points to the happy outcome that these democratic elections, the first in

more than 40 years, will produce a result that truly reflects the will of the people of the DRC.

We must therefore say that we have arrived at a proud moment of hope for the DRC and Africa, and wish the sister people of the DRC unqualified success.

Yes, the Middle East is engulfed in flames that are devouring many people in this region, and cause enormous pain to ourselves as well. But this we can also say, difficult as it may be for some fully to accept, what the people of the DRC have done and will do, is also helping to define a world of hope, radically different from the universe of despair which seems to imprison the sister peoples of the Middle East.

I can think of no better birthday present for Madiba than tomorrow's elections in the DRC, and no better tribute to the initiative he took 10 years ago to plead with the leaders of the Congolese people that together, as Africans, we must build a society based on the noble precept that - *Motho ke motho ka motho yo mongoe: Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu!*

Once again, happy birthday Madiba!

Thank you.